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LETTER DATED 25 JUNE 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF CROATIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT
OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In view of the forthcoming consideration by the Security Council of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP), I should like to convey the gratitude of my Government for the contribution made by UNMOP to the strengthening of peace and stability in the area of Prevlaka during the past six months. Throughout this period, further progress has been achieved in normalizing the situation. The border crossing points located at Debeli Brijeg and Konfin have been opened permanently, in agreement with Montenegrin authorities. Such a development has significantly contributed to confidence-building with the local population on both sides of the international border, as well as to lasting stability in the post-conflict period. The presence of UNMOP also helped to deter provocative attempts aimed at thwarting these practical measures, such as the one referred to in my letter of 20 April 1999 addressed to the President of the Security Council (S/1999/444).

It is with regret that I have to inform you that, since my letter of 17 March 1999 addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations (S/1999/291), when I reported, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1222 (1999), on the status of negotiations, no progress has been made in bilateral negotiations on the issue of Prevlaka. The reason for the lack of progress, as stated by the Yugoslav side (S/1999/480), was the refusal of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to continue with negotiations until NATO ceased its operation.

The recent letter of the President of the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, which is marred by misconceptions and half truths, thus presenting a distorted picture of the current state of negotiations, demonstrates that the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia harbours no intention of approaching the negotiations in a constructive manner. Rather, it persists in its attempts to change the existing international border and, thereby, to obstruct negotiations. While the modality of the tactics of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia has changed over time, the substantive intent has not. In 1991, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia tried to change the existing border by force, which led directly to the deployment of United Nations Observers, in accordance with Security Council resolution 779 (1992), with a clear mandate to observe the withdrawal of the Yugoslav Army from the Republic of Croatia, in



accordance with the Vance Plan (S/23280, annex III - United Nations peacekeeping plan for Croatia), and the demilitarization of the area; whilst, on several subsequent occasions, it offered Croatia an exchange of territories whereby it would acquire Prevlaka. Because all of these attempts over the years were unsuccessful, the Belgrade regime then unilaterally proclaimed the security issue of Prevlaka a "territorial dispute". Furthermore, it has tried to misuse UNMOP as a mechanism for preserving the status quo, with the ulterior motive of preventing full reintegration of the last part of Croatian territory.

In order to facilitate negotiations, the Croatian delegation has submitted to the Yugoslav side, on two separate occasions, clear evidence that Prevlaka lies within the international borders of Croatia, well aware that these facts are also well known to the Yugoslav authorities. Croatia has forwarded the aforementioned evidence to the United Nations Secretariat as well as to the members of the Security Council, and informed them about the failed attempts to move forward with bilateral negotiations. Croatia believes that the members of the Security Council, as well as the international community in general, are well acquainted with the relevant facts which define the existing border between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Croatia remains prepared and willing to negotiate demilitarization in the Prevlaka area, as well as delimitation at sea, but cannot and shall not tolerate any pretension towards its territory.

Croatia is resolved to continue to negotiate a permanent solution for the security issue of Prevlaka with all those who have a direct interest in the stability and economic prosperity of the immediate area of Prevlaka. In this respect, Croatia believes that it is essential to build upon the results achieved so far at the local level. To date, this confidence-building has positively reflected on negotiations with those parties who have a genuine interest to resolve the issue of Prevlaka. An increased civilian interaction in the area, including unimpeded civilian movement throughout the area under the observance of UNMOP, clearly represents such an opportunity.

The forthcoming report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the resolution of the Security Council should support such an important step towards consolidating stability, economic revitalization and recovery of tourism in the area, vital for sustainable and lasting peace and, not least, the livelihoods of the population on both sides of the international border. Croatia conceives of UNMOP as an actor well positioned to contribute to peace and stability through the normalization of relations, rather than a means to keep alive irresponsible promises regarding border changes.

Rest assured that Croatia, whilst adamantly preserving its sovereignty and territorial integrity, shall remain committed to the peaceful solution of the security issue of Prevlaka.

I ask for your kind assistance in circulating the present letter as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ivan ŠIMONVIĆ
Ambassador
Permanent Representative
